

Good Morning,

My name is Walt Slauch; I'm the Administrative Director of Central Montco Technical High School. I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome you to our school and thank the commission for your work on this challenging, but extremely important issue of education funding.

We are one of four technical high schools in Montgomery County; one of eighty-one technical high schools in the state of Pennsylvania. This school is owned and governed by the Colonial, Norristown Area and Upper Merion Area School Districts, which we refer to as our sending schools. The governing body of this school is referred to as the Joint Operation Committee and is comprised of three members of each of our sending schools' Boards of School Directors.

Our students come to us on a share-time basis, meaning they spend half of their day here and the other half of their day at the sending schools. We offer fifteen separate technical programs that range from the very traditional such as carpentry and auto mechanics, to those that focus on the emerging technologies of the pharmaceutical industry, computer industry and health care. In fact, our Allied Health program, based at Mercy Suburban Hospital, for the last eighteen (18) years has served as a foundation for young people who have gone on to become medical technicians, nurses, pharmacists and physicians. In essence we have a wide variety of programs for a wide range of students.

Every program that is offered at Central Montco Technical High School is based on industry need. Our programs are competency-based, which allows students to work at their own pace. In addition, our programs are hands-on and use cutting edge technology in shops and laboratories that replicate the conditions found in industry. This model of teaching and learning is proven to increase interest and motivation on the part of the learner, not to mention higher levels of mastery and retention of information and skills.

Our teachers are masters of their craft, each having worked in their particular industry before coming to this school. They not only teach specific industry skills, but are also highly trained to integrate math, reading and writing skills into the everyday activities they plan for their students. In addition, each of our programs has an Occupational Advisory Committee. These committees are comprised of business and industry partners who work closely with our teachers to ensure that we are using the appropriate tools and equipment and are teaching the skills necessary for our students to meet industry standards. These Occupational Advisory Committee members are the same individuals who work closely with our students as co-op., internship and apprenticeship mentors and future employers. Central Montco has over two-hundred and fifty (250) Occupational Advisory Committee members who volunteer their time and expertise.

The yearly operating budget for this school is approximately nine million dollars (\$9,000,000). While the school receives basic state and federal subsidies, eighty-eight percent (88%) of the budget is funded by our three sending schools. The formula used to divide the expenses between the schools is complicated, but in essence is a function of enrollment. For example, a sending school funds a percentage of the operating budget based on the number of students who attend from that school.

One of the calculations used in this enrollment driven system is “average cost per student”. The average cost per student is determined by dividing the total budget by the total enrollment. This year, the average cost per student at Central Montco Technical High School is approximately twelve thousand dollars (\$12,000). That dollar figure is in addition to the average cost of educating the student at the sending school as well. Essentially it costs almost twice as much to educate a student who chooses to attend this school. This is significant financial burden on our sending schools. And, if you play this out further, it actually creates a disincentive to send students to a school like this where the programs are considered elective. The fact is, a sending school can save money by sending fewer students.

What compounds this issue even further is how dramatically the enrollment from one school can affect the yearly costs of one or more of the other sending schools. This is based on the fact that the operating budget, which has been finalized prior to knowing exact enrollment figures, becomes a fixed cost. If one school pays less of that cost because of lower enrollment, the other schools must make up the difference. It could cost a sending school more money this year to send the same number of students as last year because one or more of their partnering districts enroll fewer students. I firmly believe that a financial incentive to send more students to this school would result in higher enrollment and a lower average cost per student. This, in turn, will ease the financial burden of operating this school on our sending schools, and at the end of the day, will result in more young people gaining the types of employability skills that drive our economy.

As you walked through our lobby this morning you may have noticed the plaques on our Distinguished Alumni Wall. If you looked at them carefully you would have seen Michael Cirafesi, recently voted the “Best Chef” on Hilton Head Island. You would have seen Robert Carroll, Senior Systems Engineer for the General Dynamics Corporation. You would have seen Jackie Wait, Physician Assistant and voted the “Physician Assistant Student of the Year” while at Philadelphia University. And, you would have seen Michael Vereb, police officer, security specialist and member of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives. But that wall represents only a small number of the thousands of women and men who have graduated from this school over the years who are now carpenters and plumbers and auto mechanics and teachers and computer specialists and nurses and cosmetologists; the list goes on and on. These people are

truly the life-blood of our economy. This school and schools like it across this state and across this country is vital to the process of preparing young people for the jobs of the present and of the future. I urge you as a taxpayer, but more importantly as a career and technical educator to support the funding proposal presented to you this morning by Mrs. Cullen on behalf of the Pennsylvania Association of Career and Technical Administrators.